

Davy, Eugene O'Donnell

by Joseph McNabb and Pauric J. Dempsey

Davy, Eugene O'Donnell (1904–96), rugby player and stockbroker, was born 26 July 1904 in Dublin, ninth among ten children of Thomas Davy (d. 1923), a Dublin publican, originally from Old Bawn, Loughmore, Co. Tipperary, and Alice Davy (née O'Donnell; d. 1954) of Annameedle, Toomevara, Co. Tipperary. The family lived at Beaumont, 60 Terenure Road East, Dublin. His uncle was Rev. Thomas O'Donnell, president (1910–49) of All Hallows College. Eugene was educated (1913–21) at Belvedere College, Dublin, where he played hurling and Leinster Schools rugby. At UCD he was a member of its first rugby team to win the Leinster senior cup (1924) and graduated BA in legal and political science (1924). Employed in his father's pub on leaving UCD, he joined Lansdowne RFC and was a member (captain 1928–30) of the team that won the Leinster senior cup in 1927–31 and 1933, and the all-Ireland Bateman cup three times. Playing mainly at out-half, but occasionally as a centre, he was a complete footballer, being versatile, powerful, pacey, and brave. An inter-provincial player for Leinster (1924–33), he made his international debut for Ireland against Wales in 1925.

In 1926 his father's pub was sold and, after working as a stockbroker, Eugene formed J. E. Davy Stockbrokers in 1929 with his elder brother James Joseph Davy (1902–91). Born 4 November 1902, James had also been educated at Belvedere College, Dublin, and UCD, graduating MA. In the Dublin stock exchange theirs was one of the few catholic firms, and through Eugene's popularity and James's business acumen it became the largest firm in Ireland. An indication of its growth is shown by the fact that in 1933–7 the company handled three to four issues of new stock. In the period 1971–81 it was the leading issuer of new stock, handling almost one hundred issues.

As Eugene's business career burgeoned, so too did his rugby career; he was one of the most outstanding rugby players Ireland has ever produced. In all he won thirty-four caps for Ireland in 1926–34 (captain 1932–3), scoring eight tries and three drop goals. Three of those tries he scored against Scotland in Murrayfield (1930). Near the end of his rugby career he unsuccessfully contested Dublin South as a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate in the 1932 general election. After his playing career ended he became a keen huntman and involved himself in rugby administration. He was president of UCD RFC (1944–5), Lansdowne RFC (1954–5) and the IRFU (1967–8). In 1967 he was manager of the Ireland side that toured Australia and won a famous test victory. He was honoured with the Hall of Fame Award by the Rugby Writers of Ireland a few years before his death.

Eugene Davy became chairman of Cahill May Roberts & Co. and a director of P. J. Carroll & Co., and retired from business in 1991, the year of James's death. He

was involved in the Belvedere Newsboys Club and the Catholic Adoption Agency. He was also a founder member of the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes and visited the shrine for twenty-five years to work as a Brancardier. In 1972 he was honoured by Pope Paul VI with the papal knighthood of St Gregory. He died 11 November 1996 at his home in Orwell Park, Rathgar, Dublin. He married (11 February 1942) Geraldine Elizabeth (d. 1995), daughter of Charles Coakley, manager of the Munster & Leinster Bank, O'Connell St., Dublin. They had three sons and five daughters.

James Davy's standing in the business community also prospered with the success of J. E. Davy Stockbrokers. He served as a member of the board of the Central Bank (1955–60). By 1958 he was chairman of Gresham Hotel Ltd and Grand Hotel Greystones Ltd. He was also at that time a director of, among others, Hammond Lane Foundry Ltd, Merchants Warehousing Co. Ltd, Mobil Oil Co. (Ireland) Ltd, and Johnson, Mooney & O'Brien Ltd. By 1966 he was chairman of the dental hospital board and honorary secretary of the National Maternity Hospital, Holles St. In the 1960s he also sat on the board of the National Bank and of the Irish Sugar Co. In 1957 he was part of the nine-man commission appointed to enquire into the accommodation needs of the constituent colleges of the NUI. Its report (1959) gave a firm nod towards the idea of a phased relocation of UCD to Belfield. In the late 1980s he was one of the trustees of the Stephen's Green Club, of which he was a member. He was also an active member of Portmarnock and Milltown golf clubs. He died 16 March 1991. For most of his life he lived on Temple Road, off Merrion Road, Dublin. He married (18 July 1934) Mary Katherine, daughter of Joseph Delahunt, a Wicklow merchant; they had two sons and one daughter.

GRO (birth and marriage certs); *O'Neill's Commercial Directory and Industrial Who's Who, 1958*, 10; *Thom's Commercial Directory, 1966*, 568; Garry Redmond, *Lansdowne Football Club centenary 1872–1972* (1972); *ITWW*; *Thom's Commercial Directory, 1983*, 847; W. A. Thomas, *The stock exchanges of Ireland* (1986), 188, 196; Edmund Van Esbeck, *The story of Irish rugby* (1986); C. F. Smith, *Whigs on the green* (1990), 112; *Ir. Times*, 18 Mar. 1991; *Fyffes*; *Ir. Independent*, *Ir. Times*, 13 Nov. 1996; *Sunday Tribune*, 17 Nov. 1996; *Times*, 30 Nov. 1996; *Belvederian* (1998); Donal McCartney, *UCD: a national idea* (1999), 265; information from Joseph Davy (son of Eugene Davy)